

Wild Singing.

At the back of the Holy ground a fireplace grows cold,
and the lonely child plays in the silence of Pottery road,
shawled mother kneels in prayer at the altar of hope,
where the church stands at the brow of Walterstown hill,
in the winter of 1847.

For the families of the Great Island are in mourning,
for fathers and sons who sew penny's into the lining of ragged trousers,
and board rickety ships at the pier in Queenstown,
to journey with the eldest daughters and thin sisters,
across the wild Atlantic to the new world and redemption.

Sailing out into the gathering grey sea and green foams,
past Blasket Mór lying asleep under its fresh blankets of early snow,
while the wind sings a new cradle song in the strained rigging,
lullabies for the poor and hungry carried in the frozen melody from the East,
and dread seeps into the shivering hold.

The coming darkness steals the last shreds of sunlight,
as they dance in the embrace of fickle waves,
driven out by the great blighted hunger which stalked the green with scythe and wrath,
a million graves at home mid the broken fields and a million outcasts on the seas,
the Hibernian refugees fleeing on the migrants voyage of survival.

The arms of Canada were waiting, the bustling docks of the Hudson beckoning,
Nova Scotia was calling to the weary, Boston to the Gael to come to rest,
yet met they disaster on the ocean, mid foul shoal and tempest,
no final kiss from mothers lips, no final lovers soft caress,
for the coffin ship shed its sad cargo, along the shores of Newfoundland.

By Ruairí de Barra.

*Written for the occasion of the transit of LÉ Samuel Beckett past Newfoundland on the 20th of September 2019,
to commemorate all the Irish migrants who died on the coffin ships, lost at sea or wrecked on the coasts,
during the perilous passage to the New World in the years of the Irish Famine.*